

which are integral to the history and fabric of Vermont. Family dairies have struggled and I have been honored to lead the work in the Senate to find the right model to help family dairy farms manage risk. After several innovative models, our current one, the Dairy Margin Coverage Program, seems to be working, and I hope that it will be renewed and improved in the next farm bill.

In 2018, I advocated to bring one of the Regional Dairy Business Innovation Centers to Vermont, which now serves the entire Northeast, supporting the development, production, marketing, and distribution of dairy products.

This committee has also been home to some of the most significant Federal forest conservation laws. In 1990, I oversaw the creation of the Forest Legacy Program, which protects private forests through conservation easements or land purchases. Since 1990, the Forest Legacy Program has conserved more than 2.8 million acres of forest land across all 50 States and U.S. Territories. And in 2008, using the historic Vermont town forest system as a model, I led the creation of the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program, which allows communities to acquire and conserve forests that provide public access, recreation, protect water supplies and wildlife habitat, serve as demonstration sites for forest landowners, and provide economic benefits from these products.

One of my proudest achievements was as chairman of the Agriculture Committee in 1990, when I authored the Organic Food Production Act, which established the USDA Organic program. What was predicted to be a “crunchy granola sideshow” has become a nearly \$58 billion industry.

I have so valued that this is, perhaps, the least partisan of all Senate committees. Please be reminded of this if you glance up at my portrait in 2023 and beyond. Keep in mind that while we will have our differences, farm bills have always been bipartisan, and we have always come together to support our farmers and rural communities.

CYBERSECURITY AND ASSURED MICROELECTRONICS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the most important technology connections are ones between people. Vermont is a place where people connecting is not only important to life, but is the very fabric of it. It was natural, I think, for me to see cyberspace as a continuation of connections like in Vermont. It is why I created one of the first websites in the Senate. It is why I have done hundreds of video chats with Vermont schoolchildren. And it is why I have ensured that among the billions of dollars of the Federal budget appropriated for cyberspace programs the executive agencies pay attention to the special perspective we have in Vermont.

For all the machines connected to each other that make up cyberspace,

the real connectivity is between the people using them, coding their software, and fabricating their hardware. Any cyber specialist will tell you the weakest link in security is the humans who use or create the programs and hardware. But they will also tell you that humans have the potential to be the most powerful part of the network.

Much of my work has been about improving the way the human connections strengthen the technological ones. I created the Trusted Foundry Program and have supported its evolution, so people in the U.S. Government and critical industries know that the chips they put in their equipment come from a fab that has the highest level of security against meddling by bad actors. The men and women in Essex Junction, VT, at GlobalFoundries work at such a fab, and the IBMers there administer the program nation-wide.

At Champlain College, I established the Leahy Center for Digital Investigation, so there would be a place where protecting and serving people in the physical world benefits from the online one. Their recent work to educate on collection of data from crime scenes that meets evidentiary standards for the Internet of Things—all the connected devices that now exist in our lives—has set a standard for the Nation, and their work with the U.S. Secret Service has improved the work at their premier cyber school for law enforcement in Alabama.

This summer, I am proud that Norwich University announced at Vermont's first annual Cyber Symposium that their School of Cybersecurity and Advanced Computing would bear my name. I am proud because, for years, their students and faculty have been a national treasure. Among many, many achievements, Norwich created and I secured funds for the wildly successful DECIDE program for command and control cyber exercises with the Department of Homeland Security, now in its fourth expansion in this year's omnibus. Norwich's expertise in helping local governments prepare for and respond to cyber events, their education opportunities for undergrads, secondary degrees, guardsmen and reservists, and their upcoming expansion of their cybersecurity discipline to fully embrace the roles of information operations, machine learning, and AI-assisted decision-making in security, are all ways they are showing national leadership.

The important connections between people go back to the earliest days of Vermont. We have always had to rely on each other. That has made us strong and resilient. Everyone here shows that we have continued that tradition into the digital age, using technology to reinforce and create new bonds between us. It has been an honor to support and strengthen that during my Senate career, and I look forward to seeing how Vermonters continue to grow in connection with each other and the world.

RECOGNIZING CENTER FOR CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in 2023 the Center for Civilians in Conflict will celebrate its 20th anniversary. This is a significant milestone, as I vividly recall when CIVIC, originally named the Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict, was created by Marla Ruzicka. When I first met Marla she was a 26-year-old dynamo from Lakeport, CA, who had gone to Afghanistan on her own to raise awareness about civilian casualties of U.S. military operations. Like many of us, she had read reports of repeated incidents of U.S. bombs missing their targets and wiping out whole neighborhoods, of innocent people being shot at checkpoints, and other deaths and injuries of civilians. Marla not only read about those tragic incidents; she became a one-woman campaign with a laptop who, within a few months of arriving in Kabul, was quoted in the New York Times and other publications, calling on the U.S. to do more to protect civilians and assist those who were harmed. As a result of her efforts, Congress created funds for both Afghanistan and Iraq, administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development, to provide such assistance, the latter fund named for Marla after she was killed, herself an innocent victim of war, in a car bombing in Baghdad on April 16, 2005.

While no one could replace Marla's vivaciousness and passion for the cause of protecting civilians in war, CIVIC survived that terrible loss and has since evolved into a global advocacy organization devoted to protecting civilians who increasingly bear the brunt of armed conflicts. Ukraine is a horrifying example that is on the front pages every day, but there are many others—in South Sudan, Yemen, Syria, and Burma to name a few.

In August, a year after the disastrous U.S. missile strike that killed a whole family in Kabul after multiple egregious intelligence failures, Secretary of Defense Austin released the Pentagon's own Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan. If fully implemented, it could significantly improve the way the Pentagon addresses civilian harm. CIVIC and other advocacy organizations have been calling for such reforms, as have I since as far back as when Marla was still alive. Congress even enacted legislation that specified procedures for evaluating claims and making ex gratia payments to eligible civilian victims, but the Pentagon ignored them. They also failed to utilize millions of dollars appropriated by Congress for this purpose, despite the obvious needs in Syria and elsewhere. So I welcome this long overdue step, but as currently envisioned, the action plan is prospective and does not contemplate investigations of past incidents of civilian casualties or assistance for those victims. That is wrong. It should provide for victims of past incidents, at least those for which credible information has already been collected, and I urge the

Secretary of Defense to revisit this question.

The importance of minimizing harm to civilians in conflict cannot be overstated. For far too long, senior officials of United States and other countries' armed forces spoke little about civilian casualties, treating them as regrettable collateral damage that is inevitable in warfare. In fact, if the laws of war are to be taken seriously, they require effective procedures and rigorous enforcement. CIVIC's mission, 20 years after Marla Ruzicka compelled us to pay attention, is as relevant today as it was then, to ensure that everything is done that can and should be done to protect civilians in conflict, and to assist those who are harmed. By doing so we reaffirm our respect for human life and human dignity that people around the world expect of us, we mitigate anger and resentment within local populations whose support we need, and we enhance the reputation and mission of our own Armed Forces.

RECOGNIZING HIGHER EDUCATION IN VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate the incredible institutions of higher education in my home State. Like many Vermonters, I was the first in my family to attend college—I chose a small, liberal arts, Catholic college—Saint Michael's College in Colchester, VT. St. Mike's, as it is affectionately called, was a home away home for me during some of my most formative years. It was there that I met my wife Marcelle, received my B.A. in government, and from where I left to receive my JD from Georgetown University Law Center.

Higher education is a path out of poverty and towards personal and professional growth for so many Americans. When those who choose to seek higher education, are able to do so—everyone succeeds. Throughout my 48 years in the Senate, I have worked to increase access to higher education through programs such as TRIO, the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, Pell grants, and Federal Work-Study. I know how important these programs are because I am a product of a quality Vermont education. Each year, thousands of students attend Vermont colleges and universities. My alma mater, St. Mike's, is not the only quality school—but one of many.

The University of Vermont, founded in 1791, is a public land-grant research university that has championed agricultural, opioid-misuse, rural development, and medical research, among many other fields of study. I have been honored to be one of UVM's biggest fans and supporters in Congress. Throughout his tenure, President Garimella has been an incredible partner of mine and Marcelle, and I look forward to spending more time with him and his wife in Burlington.

Another legendary institution is the Vermont State College system. Today,

it is comprised of several outstanding institutions: Castleton, Northern Vermont University, VT Tech, and Community Colleges of Vermont. Each of them in their own right have made a name for themselves through great strides in nursing and teaching workforce development, creating high-technology manufacturing jobs, rethinking remote learning, and expanding opportunity for mid-career learners.

I recognize that the future of higher education is often disputed. What does it offer young people in the face of uncertainty and economic insecurity? The cost of higher education has ballooned and has become out of reach for too many families. Higher education's intent has become lost. Higher education—college or university—should never be a prerequisite to a job that supports one's family.

However, higher education—such as the extension program at UVM or the language programs at Middlebury College—provide the tools to better understand our complex and constantly changing universe. They provide a challenge to get to know ourselves better and a community to sustain us.

I rise today to honor one of the places, one of the communities that first raised me, gave me a home, and a purpose. From my time travelling throughout the State, I have met Vermonters who are cybersecurity experts, doctors, researchers, mechanics, arborists, and teachers. Many of them, like me, were the first in their family to seek continuing education and many have told me that they never could have imagined this bright of a future.

I am confident that long after my tenure in the Senate, Vermont colleges and universities will continue to provide a home, challenge, and pathway to the future for Vermonters and students from around the world.

TRIBUTE TO NANCY PELOSI

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, before the conclusion of the 117th Congress, I want to add a few of my own congratulations to the outgoing Speaker of the House, NANCY PELOSI, as she concludes her second history-making and history-changing tenure as Speaker.

It is a cliché to begin these kinds of tributes with the obligatory observation that the person speaking and the subject of the reflections had their fair share of disagreements. In this particular case, that cliché certainly applies in full. Over the course of our careers, Speaker PELOSI and I have disagreed both frequently and forcefully on practically every kind of national issue that comes before Congress. We have led opposite parties. We have spent many years fighting hard on behalf of policies, ideas, and visions that usually sharply diverged.

But all of the frequent interactions that have brought our differences into sharp relief have also given me a close-up view of the formidable qualities

that fueled the Speaker's historic life journey to becoming the first woman ever to lead the House and made her such an effective advocate for her party's point of view.

Throughout our Nation's history, rising to prominence in Congress has often seen leaders sorted into competing archetypes of either a pragmatist or an idealist. But Speaker PELOSI's leadership has resembled a combination of both. Even while working to synthesize the views of the entire Democratic Caucus, the Speaker never relinquished her own passionate, substantive set of convictions on policy matters.

Speaker PELOSI's ability to marshal her side of the aisle to support specific tactics and outcomes has been formidable. It has made her a powerful partner to multiple Democratic Presidents. These abilities paved the way for the Speaker's instrumental role in helping to deliver a long list of consequential policy changes. I have no doubt that historians will reserve Speaker PELOSI a place on their lists of the most influential and consequential Speakers that our country has seen thus far.

On the very rare occasions when the Speaker and I did find ourselves rowing in the same direction—such as our shared determination that the House and Senate reconvene as soon as humanly possible on the evening of January 6, 2021, and complete our constitutional duties straightaway—I was glad to have this formidable leader in my corner.

I congratulate the Speaker on the conclusion of her time leading the House.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I have historically supported disaster assistance to farmers and others who experience losses due to no fault of their own.

However, I had to vote no on Senator SCOTT's disaster relief standalone amendment. As a lifelong family farmer and taxpayer watchdog, I have fought for many years to close loopholes that have allowed some farming operations to exploit Federal farm payments at taxpayer expense.

Congress has been generous when it comes to supporting farmers. Farmers have federally subsidized crop insurance, commodity payments, and supplemental disaster payments. Farmers also had access to Market Facilitation Program during the Trump administration and Coronavirus Food Assistance payments in the past couple years.

The Scott amendment would remove any payment limit to the disaster supplemental payments. This is a dangerous precedent to set. This amendment would release the spigot of disaster payments to wealthy farmers without regard to how much total assistance we are providing, which could mean less funding for family farmers who really need the help most.